Safety Organized Practice Profiles Research Project

Safety Organized Practice (SOP) is a holistic approach to collaborative teamwork in child welfare that seeks to build and strengthen partnerships within a family, their informal support network of friends and family, and the agency. SOP utilizes strategies and techniques in line with the belief that a child and his or her family are the central focus and that the partnership exists in an effort to find solutions that ensure safety, permanency and well-being for children. The SOP methodology is informed by a variety of best- and evidence-informed practices, including group supervision, Signs of Safety®, Motivational Interviewing, and solution-focused treatment. SOP brings a common language and framework for enhanced critical thinking and judgment on the part of all involved with a family in the pursuit of a balanced, complete picture of child welfare issues.

As one effort to ensure the delivery of a practice adheres to the program model as intended, practice profiles were developed by a workgroup¹ consisting of researchers and practitioners including nationally recognized experts, to assess the fidelity of practices for SOP. Practice profiles enable a program to be teachable, learnable, and doable in typical human service settings. Through the vision and leadership of Casey Family Programs and the Northern California Training Academy at the UC Davis Extension Center for Human Services, the SOP Fidelity Research Project which utilizes the SOP Practice Profiles is now well underway. This work is being coordinated by a Working Group that consists of; Holly Bowers, Melanie Schindell, and Susan Brooks from the University of California, Davis, and Lucia Hermens from Casey Family Programs. (Consultation is being provided by a wide range of practitioners and researchers, such as Peter Pecora and Heather Meitner.)

¹ SOP Practice Profiles Development Workgroup members: Holly Bowers, Melanie Schindell, Sophia Chin, Mike Caslor, Peter Pecora David Plassman, Heather Meitner, and Susan Brooks.
The project has been established to create a series of assessment tools that will enable agencies to assess the fidelity of SOP behaviors of workers, supervisors and agencies. Measuring how accurately and to what degree practices are implemented is critical to facilitating change and improvements in the quality and effectiveness of services, ensuring accountability, and reflecting progress toward attaining the shared goals of safety, permanency and well-being that all providers, individuals, and families share within the system.

The development of practice profiles can be considered as a piece of what a larger fidelity assessment might include. Practice profiles require the identification of critical elements that can be observed and measured in order to evaluate program implementation. Critical elements are defined as activities, materials, or skills that can be observed and verified, are reasonably discrete from other elements, and are specific to the program. In development of fidelity measures, critical elements are defined as structural (concerned with what services are delivered) or process related (concerned with how services are delivered). In practice profiles, typical structural elements might include the presence of specific behaviors and use of tools. Process elements which focus on interactions with clients cannot be directly observed from practice profiles, but may be inferred from indicators such as the documentation of family involvement in setting up a safety plan.

The practice profile tools/areas for SOP are:

- Safety Mapping
- Harm and Danger/Risk Statements
- Safety Networks
- Integrating the child’s voice
- Safety Planning
- Safety Goals
- Safety Networks
Various foundational steps have already been completed:

### 2010-2012: Created a national workgroup to create Practice Profiles
- 2012 Completed the development for six practice profiles, iterative process

### Field Review completed 2012-2013
- Obtained feedback from coaches, supervisors, and workers concerning the usability and benefits, if any, in using the practice profiles for SOP. Created an online form as an alternate way to collect information.

### 2013 Practice profiles are revised
- Overall positive feedback was received concerning the user friendliness of the tools and the applicability.

Now that the practice profiles have been reviewed and used in practice, we plan to use 2014 to collect practitioner ratings in a systematic and organized way. Our ultimate goal for developing these fidelity tools is to increase knowledge and build the skills of administrators, managers, supervisors, coaches, and staff in public child welfare agencies and partnering organizations in implementing SOP by engaging in continuous quality improvement activities and processes that will improve child welfare services. Assuming that we are able to collect a reasonable number of completed practice profiles, we would like to analyze the scale structure and establish other psychometric properties.

The research project team is currently looking to involve as many agencies as possible. For more information about the fidelity project or to explore how your organization could potentially participate, please contact Melanie Schindell at mschindell@ucdavis.edu.